than that of just scholars and specialists. The film provides a powerful counternarrative to accounts that portray Africans as powerless objects, showing the agency they were able to exercise even under the most dehumanizing conditions.

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Kevin Merz, dir. *Glorious Exit*. 2008. 75 Minutes. English and German (with English subtitles). Switzerland. ArtMattan. $245.00.

Kevin Merz's debut documentary feature, *Glorious Exit*, begins with a performance in the making. In close-up, we see the director's half-brother, Jarreth, putting on his makeup for the final staging of a theater production in Los Angeles. Although this show is coming to an end as the film begins, Merz's nimble camera captures the moment in order to focus on Jarreth's next performance. Offstage, Jarreth's Nigerian father has died, and according to custom, Jareth, as the eldest son, must oversee his father's funeral in a village near Enugu. Yet Jarreth did not grow up with his father in Nigeria. Like Kevin, he was raised primarily in Switzerland by his mother, and then moved to the U.S. to pursue acting. The "return" to his chieftain father's African home entails adapting to a new role in a context that, for Jarreth, is as distant culturally as it is geographically. Merz makes the cultural dislocations Jarreth experiences on the trip to his father's funeral (his "glorious exit") the complex subject of a deceptively simple premise.

The conflict at the heart of both the film and Jarreth's journey quickly emerges as simultaneously financial and philosophical. While still in L.A., Jarreth telephones his family in Nigeria, who have been denied access to his father's bank accounts after his death. Jarreth is incredulous at the impending costs of the funeral, finding it impossible to understand why one should spend money to mark a departure from this world rather than investing in life lived in the present and future. The family needs money to live, yet his deceased father also needs money to die. "Please don't spend any money on those things, on gifts for others right now," he implores his stepmother and three African half-brothers. His brother Edward, for instance, wants to become a doctor like their father, but doesn't have the funds necessary to pay the bribes that determine entrance to medical school in Enugu. Instead, money is being spent on presents of cows and alcohol for his father's relatives so that they will attend the funeral and thereby ensure a safe journey for the deceased to the world beyond. Jarreth draws parallels between his personal experience and what he sees as a generally dismal state of affairs in Nigeria. Gazing at defecating pedestrians and piles of trash crowding the

urban landscape, he bemoans what he interprets as a lack of personal as well as institutional initiative and follow-through. Yet without detracting from Jarreth's observations, the film allows us to interrogate the ways in which the individualist ideology that he espouses intersects with "other" socioeconomic models.

Merz offers no answers. Instead, his camera follows in intimate proximity the frustrations that Jarreth experiences. Filming with a single handheld camera, Merz deftly turns budget constraints into a cunning filmic device. The jerky camera movements and filming at close range bring the viewer into close contact with the protagonists, and the lack of stable pans or tracking shots builds a visual parallel to the miscommunications between Jarreth and his relatives. Filmic patterns perform similar legwork in creating simple but effective visual metaphors for the film's conceptual concerns. When Merz moves from shots of Jarreth driving smoothly through the L.A. night to later images of his family pushing a battered Mercedes along a crowded Nigerian street, the viewer is visually incorporated into the bumpy nature of Jarreth's voyage. These techniques reach a crescendo at the film's climax. At the funeral, the handheld camera is engulfed in throngs of speakers, dancers, celebrants, and bickering relatives. Its jumps and wobbles, as well as the rough editing, render the interpersonal conflicts and confusion palpable. At the same time, however, Merz dwells on the communal preparations for the funeral (cooking, decorating). One becomes aware from these scenes that Jarreth's sense of disconnect is opposed by equally powerful experiences of bonding and community formation to which he only has remote access.

Merz thereby subtly implicates the viewer in webs of communication, negotiation, and journeying that are marked by disconnect more often than by connection. In numerous ways, this links Merz's project to what one might call diasporic cinema practices. Most obviously, Jarreth, his filmmaker brother, and their father (who studied medicine in Europe) are all connected through diasporic chains that stretch between disparate spaces and places. Yet rather than looking to an illusory originary cultural connection that has been lost or uprooted, Merz's film insists on the experiences of nonarrival and fracture as characteristic of the borderless communication that both binds and separates. Conceptually, the mobile, reproducible medium of the film itself extends this "diasporic" web: an international production defined by border crossing rather than by national(ist) or geographic lines. Merz adroitly locates the viewer as well as the film's protagonists in a global community for whom "accented" dislocation (see Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* [Princeton, 2001]) is a quotidian norm, rather than an exception.

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